

**Wellesley Public Schools  
School Committee Meeting  
July 7, 2020  
Remote Online Meeting**

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 PM. Those present included Chair Linda Chow, Vice Chair Melissa Martin, Secretary Sharon Gray, members Jim Roberti (joined at 4:20 pm) and Catherine Mirick; Superintendent David Lussier, Assistant Superintendent Joan Dabrowski, Student Services Director Sarah Orlov, Technology Director Kathleen Dooley, and Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Charmie Curry; and Student Advisory representatives Rachel White and Ian Lei.

Ms. Chow announced that the meeting is being held remotely, recorded by local media and broadcast live by Wellesley Media.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Marc Schwabish parent of two WPS students indicated he is working with a number of WPS parents who are working on suggestions for improvements to remote learning in the fall including more live teaching, improved rigor, and increased communication/transparency with parents and students regarding the curriculum and syllabus.

Carrie Sullivan, parent of incoming kindergarten and rising 2<sup>nd</sup> grader, also feels that remote learning needs to be improved from last spring with additional live teaching. She indicated it should be the District's priority to get children back in school, especially the younger learners, for academic reasons as well as for their social/emotional needs. In addition, she wondered if there has been any consideration given to using other Town buildings for educational purposes.

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Ms. Chow reported she met with Mr. Schwabish and one other representative from the parent coalition mentioned in Public Comment, to discuss **remote learning** and parent experiences. She mentioned this group is working to synthesize this information as a way of providing input into the planning work for the fall. Ms. Chow announced that the **School Committee** will be **meeting** more frequently than usual during the summer months, with at least two more meetings in July and some in August.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Lussier offered condolences to the family of **Harry Clark**, a 2019 graduate of WHS, who passed away recently. He was an extraordinary young man who touched the lives of many in the Wellesley Public Schools and the community.

**STUDENT ADVISORY REPRESENTATIVES**

Ms. White expressed her appreciation to the Administration for including a student focus group relative to fall reopening plans.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve the June 22, and 25, 2020 Open Session minutes as amended, and the June 16, 2020 Executive Session Minutes as presented.

**MOVED:** Ms. Martin; **SECONDED:** Ms. Mirick; **ROLL CALL:** Ms. Gray – Yes; Ms. Martin – Yes; Ms. Chow – Yes; Ms. Mirick – Yes; Mr. Roberti - Yes

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**SCHOOL REOPENING PLANNING UPDATE**

Dr. Lussier highlighted that the DESE guidance recently released has asked districts to come up with three options for school in the fall: a full return, a hybrid of in-person and remote learning, and a full closure with remote learning only. He noted that whatever version of remote learning that will occur in the fall will look different from the spring and will take into consideration the spring's experience with remote learning, additional direction from the state, as well as parent feedback. The challenge is the work that is involved in appropriately vetting and ascertaining the feasibility of these models and then doing the detailed work during a very short time period of 6 to 7 weeks, while there is still the possibility that the state will completely change course.

Dr. Lussier indicated the next two weeks are critical for data gathering through a number of sources including the various Reopening Advisory Committee Working groups, as well as the parent survey that was sent out and is due to close on Friday, July 10<sup>th</sup>. Topics covered in the parent survey will help ascertain a sense of whether parents will be sending students back to school, preference on models, transportation and food service. Augmenting that survey will be focus groups at each level PreK-5, Middle and High school. There is also a survey and focus groups for educators, as well as a focus group for students. On Thursday, July 9<sup>th</sup>, WPS will be hosting a community update to provide an overview of the state guidance, the District's planning progress and timeline, as well as providing time for questions. Dr. Lussier expects to report the parent and educator survey results to the Committee on July 15<sup>th</sup>; draft recommendations for the three plans to the Committee on August 6<sup>th</sup>, allowing for additional input until the Committee's meeting on August 13<sup>th</sup>, at which time a decision will be made on which plan will be used. Dr. Lussier indicated he and his team are trying to move as fast as possible, but want to do this work thoughtfully. He also noted the timelines could be changed based on any changes to guidelines made by the state.

With respect to start dates for the fall, the current calendar has students starting on Wednesday, September 2<sup>nd</sup>. The DESE has suggested the possibility that the 180-day requirement may be shortened to allow the first few days for teachers only to acclimate to the new model, and then have students come back after Labor Day.

Questions were asked concerning outstanding topics that have not yet been addressed by DESE including how much leverage will districts have in selecting an option, and whether there will be more communication regarding curriculum. Dr. Lussier indicated DESE has clearly stated that they will be defining/deciding 85-90 percent of the reopening process, including determining the schedule. The guidelines released to date do not provide this information, however since the guidance was labeled 'initial', he

expects there will be several more rounds of communication from DESE relative to the reopening further defining the process. In addition, DESE still needs to address transportation, athletics, and additional guidance regarding special education.

Dr. Dabrowski discussed the next iteration of remote learning for the fall which will be one that is tied to key content, introduction of new material, a more consistent approach to online learning, and the formal assessment of student work. In addition, Dr. Dabrowski addressed considerations for how in-school learning will look, assuming 100 percent of students return to school buildings, while keeping in mind the safety of students and physical distancing requirements.

The Committee discussed the process of making a decision on the appropriate model, as well as having questions relative to teacher feedback on returning to school buildings and remote learning; tradeoffs of each model; and the need for a remote learning platform for students and educators who are high risk and not able to return to a classroom.

Committee members thanked Dr. Lussier, his team and all stakeholders for their work in these uncharted waters. Committee members were asked to think about the framework needed to make a decision relative to the fall reopening.

### **HHU UPDATES**

#### **Hunnewell School Schematic Design**

The Committee was joined by Kevin Kennedy and Steve Gagosian of the Facilities Management Department, and Alex Pitkin and Kristen Olsen of SMMA, who presented the nearly-completed schematic design for the Hunnewell School. Ms. Gray noted that the overall schedule has been delayed due to COVID-19. The current schedule provides approval of construction funds at a fall Town Meeting in 2021, with a debt exclusion vote in December 2021, and a potential construction start in the summer of 2022 with completion in late 2023/2024. Work currently continues with the hiring of a construction manager, the extensive permitting process, detailed design work, and development of construction documents.

Mr. Pitkin presented the updated schematic design which will hopefully be approved by the School Committee at an upcoming meeting. He reviewed the updates that resulted in a reduction of the square footage without affecting educational programming, but decreasing costs to bring the project cost to the previously presented feasibility construction budget of \$45.1 million. Floor plans, classrooms, neighborhood commons for different grade levels, and color pallets were reviewed. Mr. Pitkin reviewed the site plan and constraints; outdoor learning environments and various building perspectives were presented.

Questions were raised on various aspects of the project including the permitting process, site constraints, and energy systems.

Ms. Gray acknowledged the work of SMMA, members of the Facilities Management Department, the PBC, and the WPS Administration on keeping the project moving.

**Hardy/Upham**

Linda removed herself from the meeting at 5:35 pm and returned at 5:41 pm.

Ms. Gray reviewed the SBC's upcoming meeting schedule which will restart on July 30<sup>th</sup> with the primary topic being traffic implications at both sites, and August 6<sup>th</sup> will address sustainability and development of the project matrix. Ms. Olsen reviewed in detail the traffic and sustainability issues that will be discussed at these meetings.

Additional meetings are planned for September 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, with a public forum during the week on September 14<sup>th</sup>. It is expected that the forum will most likely be virtual with a format similar to what was used for Town Meeting. The SBC is scheduled to provide its recommendation on a preferred option on September 24<sup>th</sup>, with tentative deliberations with the School Committee and Selectmen to follow, as well as a presentation to Town Meeting members of the preferred option; a vote by the SBC, School Committee and Selectmen; and final submission to the MSBA by October 27<sup>th</sup> in order to secure state funding for the project.

**COMMITTEE WORK PLANNING ON ANTI-RACISM**

Ms. Chow addressed the current efforts in town, the state and country in response to issues of racism, equity and diversity, recognizing the work of Wellesley students, both current and alums, who have been very involved in a number of organizations and movements bringing these issues to the forefront. She referenced a resolution prepared by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees to political leaders for consideration by each member district expressing the District's concerns.

The Committee was joined by Dr. Charmie Curry, the WPS Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, who discussed the MASC resolution and ways the District can continue its work to address racism and social justice.

Dr. Curry noted that the MASC resolution broadly covers a number of issues that are already being addressed in Wellesley. Although she does not oppose anything that is stated in the resolution, she questioned the need to submit concerns at the state level and recommends that the focus for WPS should be to continue its work locally by reviewing curriculum, hiring and retaining diverse faculty and staff members, and providing additional professional development for faculty and staff.

Dr. Curry suggested some ways the Committee could move forward and be responsive on these topics would be to provide a space for the community to broaden awareness and think about ongoing needs of the District, as well as professional development opportunities for Committee members to help build awareness of how these issues are manifested in the schools, and develop a long-term vision to pursue a more antiracist future.

The Committee discussed the need to review its policies to determine if changes to existing policies or new policies are needed relating to DE&I issues. Discussion will continue at a future meeting relative to the MASC resolution and/or the need for a more specific resolution as it relates to Wellesley Public Schools.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no callers.

**ADJOURNMENT**

At 6:05 pm, Ms. Chow entertained a motion to adjourn.

**MOVED:** Ms. Gray; **SECONDED:** Ms. Martin; **ROLL CALL:** Ms. Mirick – Yes; Ms. Gray – Yes; Ms. Chow – Yes; Ms. Martin – Yes.; Mr. Roberti - Yes

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Gray  
Secretary

**Documents and Exhibits Used:**

Draft Minutes June 22 and 25, 2020 Open Sessions

Draft Minutes June 16, 2020 Executive Session

Hunnewell Schematic Design Presentation

MASC Anti-Racist Resolution